

## INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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### OPERATION OF ONE-MAN POLICE PATROL CARS

What has been the experience of cities in the use of one-man police patrol cars and what factors should govern the installation of a one-man patrolling program?

Extensive use of one-man patrol cars is both feasible and practical. This conclusion is based on a recent survey by the International City Managers' Association which also shows that this patrol method should be put into effect gradually or on a trial basis in order that the men may be properly trained. Additional motor equipment may be needed and two-way radio is essential but these costs are offset by the more extensive and intensive police coverage made available. Complete records and frequent evaluation of patrol needs based on experience in each beat are necessary to keep the program functioning effectively.

The number of cities using one-man patrol cars has increased appreciably during the past five years. A total of 624 cities, or 66 per cent of the 947 cities over 10,000 population that furnished police data for the 1950 Municipal Year Book, are now using one-man patrol cars. This compares with 54 per cent in 1945. Eighty-two per cent of the 624 cities use both one- and two-man patrol cars and 18 per cent use one-man vehicles exclusively (see MIS Report No. 35, April, 1947, for more data on the trend toward one-man cruisers).

To obtain information on the operation of one-man patrols the International City Managers' Association in June, 1950, sent a questionnaire to the police chiefs of 24 cities that are using one-man cars. These cities range in population from 37,000 to nearly 2,000,000. The 24 cities are: Berkeley, Long Beach, Pasadena, San Francisco, and San Jose, Calif.; Denver and Colorado Springs, Colo.; Hartford, Conn.; Columbus, Ga.; Wichita, Kan.; Portland, Me.; Kalamazoo and Pontiac, Mich.; St. Louis, Mo.; Niagara Falls, N. Y.; Columbus and Dayton, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pa.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Richmond, Va.; Seattle and Spokane, Wash.; and Madison and Milwaukee, Wis. Replies from these cities and a study by the Safety Board of Montgomery County, Md., form the basis for this MIS Report.

Six of the 24 cities use one-man patrols exclusively on all shifts (Berkeley, Colorado Springs, Hartford, Madison, Portland, and Wichita). Six other cities use one-man cars in some areas on each of the three shifts (Dayton, Milwaukee, Niagara Falls, St. Louis, San Jose, and Seattle). The remaining 12 cities limit one-man operation to the period from the beginning of the day shift until early evening with the exception of Pasadena which uses one-man cars from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. in all areas.

Four cities (Berkeley, Chattanooga, Niagara Falls, and Wichita) have over 20 years of experience, seven have at least 10 years of one-man patrol operation (Colorado Springs, Denver, Hartford, Portland, San Francisco, San Jose, and Spokane), and four have been using this plan for five years or more (Kalamazoo, Madison, Milwaukee, and Pontiac). The remaining cities have all had less than

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five years of experience with one-man cars; Columbus, Ga., and Seattle, in 1949, are the most recent to change.

Why One-Man Cars? The purpose of one-man operation was restated recently by O. W. Wilson, Dean of the University of California School of Criminology and former police chief of Wichita, in a letter written in connection with this survey: "The motorized patrolman should be thought of as a foot patrolman who has been furnished a vehicle to transport him from the location of one task to another, and to the scene of action with speed and without fatigue. He should perform all of the duties of a foot patrolman, and in consequence should spend a great part of his time on foot where he may observe, check the security of establishments, and make himself available to the general public.

"The patrolman who remains in his parked vehicle in a secluded spot between calls, and the patrolman who spends all of his time driving his vehicle over the city streets, is not performing suitable patrol service. The motorized patrolman who considers himself a foot patrolman and performs all of the duties of a foot patrolman, using his vehicle only for transportation purposes, will provide the most effective and economical form of patrol service."

The Milwaukee police chief answered one of the survey questions with this remark about the use of one-man cars: "Good police officers enjoy activity. One-man squad cars provide activity and the exercise of judgment and discretion."

With reference to traffic patrol work, the committee on enforcement of the President's Highway Safety Conference had this to say in its 1949 report: "One-man traffic patrols are, of course, desirable in the interest of securing maximum coverage with available personnel. Two men in a car will detect few, if any more violations than one man. One-man patrols are, therefore, desirable in getting maximum coverage with available traffic personnel."

Other arguments for one-man cars were set forth by Mr. Wilson in Public Management, for April, 1940, as follows: "The automobile has diminished much of the discomfort and inconvenience in the performance of the patrolman's job: it provides protection during inclement weather; with the use of radio, it provides continuous communication with headquarters; and it represents a mobile police headquarters.

"Why should a patrolman who operates alone on foot find it necessary to have a brother officer with him when he is supplied with many added conveniences? If he was able to do the job satisfactorily alone before, should he not be able to do it equally well or even better when equipped with the most modern means of transportation and communication? The answer is that one man in a car can patrol more efficiently than two men, and also that he can operate more safely."

The advantages of one-man patrol cars in the cities where they are in use include: (1) maximum distribution of manpower; (2) broader and more intensive coverage of patrol areas--smaller beats and more cars; (3) prompter service and more frequent inspection of known police hazards; (4) fewer traffic and criminal violations--increased public awareness of police protection; (5) increased efficiency through greater self-reliance, initiative and individual responsibility for assignment; and (6) lower cost of operation.

The Negative View. Information was obtained in the survey on the arguments generally raised by police personnel against the use of one-man cars. These arguments and answers are:



1. The element of personal danger is high. No patrolman in the 24 cities has lost his life as the result of operating a one-man patrol car. Half of the cities stated flatly that one-man patrol operation was no more hazardous than two-man cars; five had no comment or, like Milwaukee, stated that their experience to date was not conclusive; and seven cities said that one-man cars were more dangerous but gave no reasons.

2. Lone officers tend to be over-cautious. This may also be an argument in favor of one-man cars. The Montgomery County special committee stated that two-man teams often individually bolster each other's courage to the point of indiscretion. (For the Montgomery County study, see note at end of this report).

3. One man cannot drive and observe at the same time. There is little or no validity in this argument. The tendency of two men in a car to visit, sleep, or transact personal business seriously detracts from their ability to observe. One man operating alone is likely to be more watchful.

4. A lone officer may find it difficult or impossible to communicate with headquarters when going on an assignment or to monitor his radio when away from his car on a call. Answers to this contention are that if a second officer is necessary on the patrol team he too is likely to be away from the radio; that the single officer can report "out of service" when leaving his vehicle; and that there are ways of indicating to an officer away from his vehicle that he should establish radio communication with headquarters as soon as possible. One chief reports that signal lights over intersections or on police call boxes or on the cars themselves can be actuated by a radio signal from headquarters.

5. A second officer is often necessary to act as witness in court cases. This argument is a weak one. Many excellent court cases are prepared by foot patrolmen and single motorcycle officers. Officers interested in making good records will procure and present better evidence on their own than when they feel that they can count on the corroboration of a fellow officer.

Obstacles in Installing One-Man Cars. Half of the 24 cities in this survey reported no difficulties at the time they began using one-man cars. In the remaining 12 cities, obstacles ran from equipment shortages (Pontiac) and doubts on the part of the public as to the effectiveness of the new program (Niagara Falls and San Francisco), to opposition from the officers themselves (Dayton, Kalamazoo, Madison, Philadelphia, Richmond, San Jose, Spokane and St. Louis). In Philadelphia opposition was recorded in a sharp drop in the number of arrests made.

In Madison the police union and the Policemen's Protective Association endeavored to collect isolated statistics and the opinions (but not always the experience) of police officers in other cities and brought considerable pressure to bear on the city council. Pasadena mentioned the need for breaking old habits and training in new techniques as an obstacle to inauguration of the plan.

The attitude of the press in this controversy appears to have been uniformly neutral. Newspapers in only three of the cities commented on the changeover. Hartford newspapers favored the plan, opinion was divided in San Francisco, and in Seattle reporting was generally straight-forward and factual but with a certain amount of slanting against the plan by feature writers.

Opposition on the part of police personnel is still strong in many of the cities after several years' experience with one-man cars and despite good safety records and satisfaction of officials and the public with one-man operation.

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Easing Into the Program. The extent to which one-man cars can be used in a given city must be decided by local conditions. Officials in the cities where the one-man system has been used the longest and most successfully urge moderation at the outset. One police chief suggests a trial program for a few months to a year during which it should be possible to demonstrate that hazards do not increase and that the standard of police service actually improves. In this way he feels it should be possible to win over any opposition.

Most of the cities included in this survey have made the changeover gradually. Denver, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia, for example, began by using one-man cars in outlying and less populous areas and gradually extended the service. Denver and Milwaukee now use some one-man cars on all three shifts, while Philadelphia still uses them only on the day shift. A survey preceded the adoption of one-man cars in Dayton and Madison. The survey in Dayton was made in 1947 and the first one-man cars were put into operation in 1948. Dayton now uses some one-man cars on two of its three shifts.

Madison was faced with a budget limitation in 1949 and the need for extending police service. A survey was made of city layout, police records, and existing police coverage in order to establish patrol districts based on geography, population, accidents, crime rates, and other police business. The study showed the need for patrol districts of various sizes and number according to location and time of day.

The only feasible way to provide the desired coverage in Madison at all hours within the existing budget was to split two-man teams and put one man in each vehicle. After the decision was made a manual of procedure was adopted which describes police tactics, and the mechanics of arrest to be used under the one-man patrol system. All members of the department were required to study the manual, and commanding officers attended a one-month school in which they were taught the procedures and supervision necessary for operating the program.

Procedure in Changing to One-Man Cars. Students of the one-man method of police patrol have little difficulty in agreeing on the factors necessary for success. First, is a good system of reporting and central records in order to establish the incidence and location of crimes, accidents or other trouble. Second, is a careful plan of organization including consideration of such factors as size and character of beats, number of men and vehicles available for each shift and beat, amount of foot patrol and vehicle travel desired, time of day when shifts change and whether or not they should overlap, and provision for radio communication and competent dispatching. Third, is equipment--enough vehicles to provide the coverage required or desired, with two or three-way radio as standard equipment on all vehicles. Fourth, is a well-organized and conducted training program. Officers must learn how one man stops suspicious cars and approaches the driver, and how to prowl alleys and try doors.

Besides learning the techniques of one-man operation, officers must also be indoctrinated with the spirit of the plan and a desire to make it work. Chief J. D. Holstrom of Berkeley put it this way: "The men must be imbued with the idea that there is a vast difference between foolhardiness and common sense, and must realize that when they call for additional help to handle unusual situations, it is not a sign of cowardice but merely the exercise of good judgment. Because they will be working alone and will be in and out of their cars, they must be much more conscious of maintaining communications with headquarters." Borrowing instructors from departments already using one-man cars is, when possible, an excellent solution to the problem of training.



Factors which should be considered in determining when and how extensively to use one-man and two-man vehicles for patrol work are well established. They are listed below as a guide for analyzing present systems as well as in considering changes: (1) administrative organization and control of the police function; (2) financial conditions; (3) type, frequency, and location of crimes; (4) traffic control problems; (5) special service requirements of citizens; (6) effectiveness of supervision; (7) areas to be patrolled; (8) concentration of personnel; (9) quality and efficiency of communications; and (10) training and ability of personnel. Each of these factors should be considered and answers developed in relation to all other factors before an existing system is changed.

Current Operating Experience. Thirteen of the 24 cities whose experience forms the basis of this report operate one-man patrol cars in all areas of the city. The other 11 confine them to certain areas, usually residential. Eleven cities have some one-man cars on all three shifts; three use them on day and evening shifts; three operate them only during daylight hours; and seven confine their use to the day shift exclusively.

In a number of the cities one-man patrols are augmented by vehicles with two or more men. Columbus, Ohio, for example, uses ambulance-cruisers manned by two men in certain areas. Hartford augments its one-man cruisers with foot patrolmen in the downtown business area. San Jose maintains four one-man cars in operation on each of its three shifts and has additional two-man cars operating between 7:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m.

Size of areas covered varies with population density and crime rates. Average for the 24 cities on all three shifts is one and one-half square miles, ranging from a low of seven-tenths of a mile in Berkeley on the afternoon shift till midnight, to 10 square miles in Pontiac where cruisers overlap foot patrol assignments. Pasadena and Madison change the size of beats from time to time on the basis of continuing analyses of records, and Wichita apparently maintains a completely flexible schedule adaptable to the activity and hazards existing at any time.

Two of the questions in the survey involved the number of radio calls that are answered by one-man and two-man cars. The summary figure obtained is not conclusive because of a wide variation in the ratio between one and two-man cars in the various cities. However, in Hartford, Connecticut, which operates one-man cars exclusively on all shifts, a single cruiser responds in 99 per cent of the cases and in the remaining one per cent two or more one-man cars may be dispatched. Berkeley also uses one-man cars exclusively and estimates that more than one car is dispatched in 50 per cent of the desk assignments. Agreement is general among all 24 cities that no more than two men are required in a car, except in very unusual circumstances and then only by special assignment.

In all of the cities, the decision to dispatch more than one cruiser on a case appears to rest partly on the request of the first patrolman and largely on the judgment of the dispatcher according to written criteria or his experience. Madison specifies in its manual of procedure the types of cases which ordinarily require more than one officer. When a criminal is in action, a minimum of five cars is sent to the area of the crime in order to cordon it off.

The dispatcher in one-man patrol operations should be highly skilled and have keen judgment based on experience. The cities in this survey are evenly divided, however, between giving the dispatcher full authority and responsibility for

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ordering vehicles from place to place and requiring him to refer doubtful cases to a superior officer for decision. In six of the cities there appears to be an overlapping of the dispatching function between the shift commander and the dispatcher. Few cities have standard operating procedures such as those in Madison, and trust exclusively to the judgment of the dispatcher or an officer, both of whom must have had actual beat experience. In all cities the first car at the trouble scene is expected to request reinforcements if they appear necessary. Where the patrol officer must rely on the judgment of the dispatcher to send enough support, it is to his advantage to describe his situation clearly and specifically.

All of the departments carry on some form of training of their patrolmen in one-man operations. Generally, as in Dayton and Milwaukee, one-man training is carried on along with the other training normally provided for recruits. Madison has its manual of procedure that incorporates all of the accepted one-man techniques. The St. Louis school is manned by F.B.I.-trained instructors and training films are used.

Age, physical condition, intelligence, and previous experience are generally taken into account in assigning officers to one-man car operation. Rookies are seldom put out alone but are first assigned with an older experienced officer to learn the ropes. In Wichita and Berkeley where individuals have operated alone for many years no special physical, mental, or experience requirements are set up for one-man operations, except as they are taken into account at the time of original appointment.

As for equipment, most vehicles in the departments surveyed carry outside or top-mounted sirens and red-flashing, oscillating, or spot lights. In 10 of the cities shotguns are standard equipment in all one-man vehicles and in one other city a personal shotgun may be carried with special approval of the commanding officer, although the practice is discouraged. In all of the other cities, patrolmen carry only their regular sidearms, night stick or blackjack, and handcuffs.

Police chiefs of two-thirds of the 24 cities feel that one-man operation is at least as safe as two-man operations if the use of one-man cars is confined to the areas and types of conditions which experience and good judgment indicate can be safely handled. Of the remaining eight cities, three made no reply to the question, while five who stated that one-man operation was more hazardous than two-man gave no explanation for their conclusion. The six cities which use one-man cars exclusively agree that one-man operation is no more hazardous than two-man and two of the cities feel it is even less so.

Note: Further information on the use of one-man patrol cars is contained in the following: (1) International City Managers' Association, The Municipal Year Book, 1950. (Chicago: The Association. 1950). Table XVIII on pp.423-441 shows the extent and time of day one-man cars are used in all cities over 10,000 population. (2) Special Committee on One-man Patrol Cars of the Montgomery County Safety Board, A Report on Police Patrol Operation in Montgomery County, Maryland. 49pp. Biblio. (Rockville, Md.: County Manager's Office, Montgomery County Court House. 1950). A summary of the arguments about one-man patrols and recommendations for Montgomery County. (3) Weatherly, Bruce and J. D. Holstrom, "Experience with One-Man Patrol Cars," Public Management, November, 1950 (Chicago: International City Managers' Association). Two articles under the single heading by the police chiefs of Berkeley, Calif. (Holstrom) and Madison, Wis. (Weatherly) describing one-man patrols in their respective cities.